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Assessment of Social Dimensions of Structural Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa

The Social Dimensions of Adjustment Project and Its Implications for Statistics

(Contributed by the World Bank)

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I. DEVELOPING A NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

A. Objectives of the SDA Project

1. The SDA project was established in 1987 as a joint venture between the UNDP Regional Programme for Africa, the African Development Bank and the World Bank with the objective of assisting participating governments in integrating social dimensions in the design of their structural adjustment programs and development plans. While structural adjustment programs can help to strengthen and rehabilitate economies at the national level, it is recognized that there may be high social costs. In particular, a number of sub-groups of the population, the vulnerable groups, may stand to be losers in the process - either in the short and medium term, or else in the long term. The SDA project aims to ensure that these groups are identified and protected, both during and after the adjustment process. The keynote principle underpinning the project is "growth with equity".

B. Operations of the SDA Project

2. The SDA project operates at two levels; at the regional level and at the country level. At the regional level, the project unit at the World Bank has prepared a Policy and Operational Agenda aimed at ensuring that poverty reduction policies and programs are fully integrated into structural adjustment programs and development plans. At the country level, 26 African countries have now requested participation in the project.

3. Once a country has joined the program, one of the first steps is the preparation of a Country Assessment Paper. This document contains an initial poverty profile of the population and the identification of key policy issues, based on existing information. The SDA project unit then assists with the preparation of a Country Operational Strategy based on three essential components:

(a) A policy component, including: the development of macro economic strategies aimed at growth with poverty reduction; the design of core public expenditure programs targeted at the poorer segments of the population; and the encouragement of processes that foster the participation of community groups and NGOs in the design and follow-up of socio-economic policies and programs.

(b) A programs and projects component: including the design of specific interventions aimed at protecting vulnerable groups in the course of adjustment and the design of specific programs and projects to foster the participation of the poor in socio-economic activities.

(c) An institutional development component: including the strengthening of institutions responsible for socio-economic policy formulation, strengthening government capacity in the area of social policy planning and programming, policy analysis, and development of statistical databases for assessing the evolution of living standards of different population groups during adjustment.

4. In this paper, we shall be primarily concerned with the institutional building aspects of the project which focus on the strengthening of national statistical and analytical capabilities.

C. Improving the dialogue between data collectors and users

5. One of the features of the recent years of austerity in Africa has been the cuts in public expenditure on statistical services. Statistical offices have been hard hit and a number of important statistical and survey programs launched in the 1970s have, in the 80s, been halted due to lack of funds. One argument put forward to explain the stagnation of statistical services is that such services have traditionally been supply driven rather than demand driven. Statistical offices have developed survey programs without proper reference to the potential users of the data and a dichotomous situation has occurred in which, on the one hand users have complained that the sort of data they need are not available, and on the other hand, the statistical offices have been forced to suspend a number of data collection activities for lack of funds and interest.

6. The logic underpinning the design of the SDA project encourages the development of a much greater rapport between user and supplier in that it starts with a clear identification of the objectives, i.e., the maintenance of key social expenditures within the framework of the adjustment process and the support of vulnerable groups of the population. It then works backwards towards the recognition that, in order to achieve this objective, an ongoing program of planning and analysis must be established, and for this, a basic information system is essential. Theoretically such information could be already available in a country, but there are few African countries at the moment where the statistical system can be said to be adequate for this purpose.

7. When a country joins the SDA program, it is a prerequisite that the necessary mechanism is set up from the start to ensure regular dialogue and communication between planners, analysts and statistical offices. The vehicles for this may be an SDA Task Force or a Users' Committee. The composition of such a group will obviously vary from country to country but will include representatives from both the government and private sectors

(including universities and research establishments). It is also important to ensure that each social sector (education, health, employment, etc.) is adequately represented. The group is expected to meet regularly to review: the needs of the planners/policy makers, the analytical work that will be required, and the data that will be needed to support such analysis. Without the existence of such a committee, it is felt that the SDA survey program could rapidly become a sterile exercise.

D. Development of a hierarchical information system

8. The monitoring and evaluation of the social effects of macro economic policy on different sub-groups of the population is a massive task which needs to be clearly conceptualized. It also requires the development of a carefully elaborated program if it is to succeed. The SDA project has prepared a basic document, the Conceptual Framework Paper (CFP), in which the theoretical, empirical and policy framework underpinning the SDA program is described. This paper distinguishes between three distinct but interlinked levels of the economy, the macro, meso and micro. The definition of the macro level is standard and relates to economic activities at the national level - monetary and fiscal policy, national economic programs, etc. Adjustment policies and programs are conceived and executed at this level.

9. The more unusual feature of the CFP classification however is the introduction of the concept of the meso level. This essentially is an intermediary level covering the socio-economic and institutional infrastructure, and factor and product markets. It is a key level in that it is the first level at which the effects of macro-economic policy will be felt. For example, if one wished to observe the effects of cuts in government expenditure in, say, the health sector, it would be in the hospitals and health centers located at the meso level, that such cuts would first be felt, probably through a drop in staff numbers, medicines, preventative care programs, etc. Similarly if the adjustment policy involved the liberalization of agricultural prices, it is in the markets that the effects will first be noted. Health facilities and markets, as well as schools, enterprises providing employment, transport services, and many other facilities and services are all to be found at the meso level.

10. The last level is the micro level, that is at the level of the small informal enterprise, household or individual. Having first had an effect at the meso level, adjustment policies then produce an impact at the micro level. These impacts can be quite complex. The impact of cuts in government expenditure on health will not only have a direct impact on the household's health status, but will also affect its employment and earnings

potential. Similarly higher food prices will affect a household in a number of different dimensions, including income, expenditure, health, etc. Most important is the fact that different households, or household groups will be affected in different ways. For some agricultural households, higher prices will provide a positive impact, for other groups it will be negative. For some groups, the combined effects of different adjustment policies may promote temporary hardship and for others it may pull them irrevocably below acceptable poverty levels.

11. An essential feature of the SDA program is that such impacts are effectively monitored and studied so that suitable compensatory programs can be created for those groups of the population adversely affected. However, in order to do this, and to understand the linkages that operate between macro, meso and micro levels, an adequate information base must be available at each level. This is represented in Table 1.

Table 1

A Hierarchical Information System for the SDA

1 LEVEL	2 SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF ADJUSTMENT	3 ANALYSIS	4 DATA
MACRO	Policy	Sam-based models	Trade statistics Financial/economic statistics National accounts Consumer Price Index
MESO	Effects	Sectoral Studies: - Poverty - Employment - Migration - Health - Education - Food security - Women in development	Prices Institution studies Community questionnaire
MICRO	Impact	Household and Informal sector: - Poverty - Employment - Migration - Health - Education - Food security - Women in development	Household surveys Informal sector surveys

12. Column 1 indicates the three levels. Column 2 shows the logical linkages extending down from policy execution to effects and impact. Column 3 indicates the type of analysis that may be required at each level to monitor and study activities at that

level as well as the linkages that connect them. At the national level, the means of integrating social criteria more fully into the national planning process involves moving beyond a simple analysis of absolute national income levels and devoting more attention to the distribution of income amongst population groups. One way of doing this is through the use of social accounting matrices and the development of general equilibrium models. This is, of course, a long term objective and one that can only be assured once there is a satisfactory national data base. It does however provide the framework for identifying what data will be required. The effects of adjustment policy at the meso level and the impact at micro level will be measured through a series of social studies on separate but related subjects. Column 4 indicates the main data sources needed at each level. At the macro level, the primary sources include formal sector statistics. At the meso level, a key requirement will be for effective price information. This will need to be supplemented by enterprise and sector service surveys. In addition, the SDA project is proposing the introduction of a community level survey. At the micro level, the main sources of information will be household and informal sector surveys of which we shall have more to say in Part II.

13. When all the components are taken together, it is apparent that the complete information system as described above is an extensive one. Two points need to be made clear, however. The first is that in most countries, many of the elements of the system are already in place and being extensively used. The development of national statistical services has traditionally been based on a top down approach, from macro to micro. That is to say, the first priority has been to establish the means for generating national accounts at the macro level. This has involved not just the collection of government and formal sector statistics but also the execution of a certain number of surveys at the micro level (labour force surveys, agricultural surveys, etc.) that feed data into the national accounts. Many countries too have operational price collection services, and have undertaken household income and expenditure surveys to establish weights for the construction of consumer price indices. At the same time, the international community has been supporting a number of global statistical initiatives, such as the UN National Household Survey Capability Program (NHSCP), the International Comparison of Prices (ICP), the International Food and Nutritional Surveillance Program (IFNS), the Demographic and Health Survey Program (DHS), the Global Early Warning System, etc. The purpose of the SDA program is not in any way to replace or duplicate existing programs, but to make maximum use of them. The presence of an SDA program in a country, and in particular of a users committee, should in fact act as a catalyst to ensure better co-ordination of statistical programs and to identify gaps that need filling.

14. The second point to note is that it is not necessarily through the SDA program itself that the gaps will be filled. The SDA program may, for instance, identify the need in a country for better price collection. This does not mean that it has either the competence or the resources to set up the new system, but it can play a co-ordination role to ensure effective liaison and co-ordination between agencies and departments so that the gap is filled by the most competent authority.

15. One technical statistical area to which the SDA program has however devoted some considerable attention has been in the development of appropriate survey methodology for the collection of socio-economic data at the household or micro level. The main vehicle for this is an integrated multi-subject household survey.

II. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS AT THE HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

A. Background: The Living Standards Measurement Survey

16. The origin of the SDA interest in household surveys stems from work done by the Welfare and Human Resources Division of the World Bank on the design and implementation of household surveys in developing countries. The focus of the work was on establishing means of measuring living standards and studying poverty-related issues. In 1984, it developed a household survey and questionnaire, the Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS), which was first applied in Africa in Côte d'Ivoire in 1985. The survey was repeated over the three subsequent years and was also introduced to Ghana and to Mauritania. It was then agreed that these surveys should be co-ordinated by an operational project rather than a research project and so they were taken over by the SDA program.

17. The survey introduced a number of innovative features.

18. Firstly, the main objective of the survey was to measure standards of living at the household level. As such it was a single purpose survey, but in order to achieve this end, it had to be at the same time a multi-subject survey. The main subject areas covered were: income and expenditure, education, health, migration, housing, agriculture, non-agricultural household enterprises, consumption, transfers, savings, and anthropometry. Unlike some other integrated household surveys, it was not designed as a modular survey to which special subject modules could be attached or excluded at will, but was always intended to be a multi-subject survey in which all subjects were covered.

19. The second set of features of the survey were operational, namely the use of mobile enumeration teams instead of the traditional sedentary enumeration force. Five to eight mobile teams (depending on the country) consisting of one supervisor,

two (in some cases three) enumerators, and a driver were used to collect the data. Each unit was virtually self-contained in that it would have a specific and constant number of clusters and households to cover. The total sample size was thus a function of the number of teams and could be increased or decreased by adding or removing teams. In order to ensure adequate sample coverage, each survey round lasted for one year. During this period, a sample of 2,000 to 4,000 households could be enumerated. Each household would be visited by an enumerator twice with an interval of two weeks between visits. For most of the questions, data was collected, using as the reference period "the previous 12 months". For certain categories of expenditure and consumption data, the information was collected during the second visit to the household and the reference and recall period used was "since my last visit", i.e., a bounded recall period of two weeks.

20. The implications of using this methodology as far as the sample design was concerned were important since it made it possible to increase the number of clusters and reduce the number of households per cluster which resulted in significant improvements in sampling efficiency as well as commensurate decreases in costs, compared with the sort of sample design that would have been required if non-mobile enumerators had been used.

21. The third innovative feature of the survey was the decentralization of the data entry and editing process. Each mobile team operated out of a regional headquarters at which a micro computer was located. As soon as questionnaire forms were filled out, they were taken to the regional headquarters for data entry and editing. This process would be completed in under one week which meant that queries on the questionnaires that had been completed during the first visit to a household, could be referred back for verification during the second visit. Apart from improving the quality of the data that was finally entered, the system had the advantage of allowing the initial tabulations of the data to be produced very soon after the data had been collected. Indeed, it was possible to produce interim reports on the basis of the first six months of data collection even before the full survey was completed.

B. The SDA Household Survey Program

22. Despite the relative success of the LSMS survey in producing high quality data on living standards, it was recognized that, before the SDA embarked in any new countries, a full review of the survey methodology was needed. To begin with, the nature of the SDA program was fundamentally different from that of the LSMS, which was essentially research oriented. Secondly, as far as the SDA program was concerned, there were a number of limitations in the LSMS approach which needed to be addressed. On the basis of extensive discussions with African statisticians

and with other agencies and experts operating in the field of household surveys, a number of modifications to the original survey design were proposed. On the one hand, the survey was considered too limited because the sample was not sufficiently large, and on the other hand it suffered from limitations because the questionnaire was too large and unwieldy.

23. Although the need to have a multi-subject household survey feeding into the other elements of the SDA program is basically unquestioned what has been questioned has been the form that such a survey should take. Basically, it has been recognized that what is needed is a more flexible approach. The solution proposed by the SDA is that the survey can be undertaken in several forms. At one extreme, there is what may be called the intensive form - intensive, in that it uses a relatively lengthy and detailed questionnaire. Its purpose is to investigate, in detail, the complexity of the impact of the adjustment process on different household groups and the relationship between the macro policies and effects at household level. At the other extreme, the survey can be carried out in its extensive form - extensive in that it is administered to a larger sample of households, but uses a shorter and more limited questionnaire. These two manifestations of the household survey are, in actual fact, two fundamentally different but complimentary survey instruments - each having a somewhat different objectives. We shall for the time being refer to them respectively as the Intensive Household Survey (IHS) and the Priority Information Collection (PIC) survey and shall consider them each in turn.

C. The Intensive Household Survey (IHS)

24. The full household survey most closely resembles the original LSMS. It is aimed at providing a complete coverage of the full range of topics needed to better understand the mechanisms of the adjustment process at household level. These topics include: size and composition of the household; health, education and employment status of each household member; access to amenities and services; valuation of durable, productive and financial assets; productive activities, both agricultural and non-agricultural; income, transfers and savings; and food and non-food consumption and expenditures.

25. As noted earlier, the SDA is very specifically concerned with understanding the effects of adjustment programs on different groups of the population and with introducing the concept of social programs and policies targeted towards least favoured groups. The issue is a complex one. It involves refining and reclassifying the population, which is generally initially classified by broad socio-economic groups, firstly into vulnerable groups and then into specific target groups for policy and projects. This is one of the primary objectives of the IHS.

26. An initial classification of the population by socio-economic group will generally be made before the survey is undertaken and these groups will be used as stratification criteria in designing the sample so as to ensure adequate coverage of each group. Typical socio-economic classifications include: urban and rural population; small-holders (sometimes with sub-classifications by farming system, agro-ecological zone or holding size), female-headed household, etc. The classifications of households will usually be done at the cluster level but may also be done at the household level using data obtained from the listing exercise. The second level of classification, the identification of vulnerable groups will be based on an analysis of the survey data itself. Essentially this is a poverty classification which will identify the sub-groups of the original socio-economic groups lying on or below a given poverty line. The issues of how to establish the poverty line and the choice of index to be used to measure poverty are key analytical issues but ones which lie outside the scope of this paper. The third stage in the analysis is the study of the dynamics of the vulnerable groups both in terms of the extent and form of their vulnerability (i.e., whether their vulnerability is temporary or chronic), as well as in terms of how they have been affected by and are responding to the adjustment process. This finally provides the necessary input into the development of appropriate and targeted programs and policies.

27. Unlike the earlier LSMS surveys, the data generated through the IHS is to be processed and analysed in the countries themselves. In order to help countries with this task the SDA project is preparing a series of guidelines for sector specific analysis plans. The subjects covered by these analysis plans are those already shown in Table 1, namely: poverty, employment, migration, health, education, food security, and women in development. In the same way that prototype analysis plans have been prepared, so too has a prototype questionnaire been prepared by the SDA. This is not a rigid instrument however and can be extensively adapted and modified to suit individual country requirements and conditions.

28. Whilst the study of vulnerable groups of the population has been given as one of the main objectives of the IHS, it is by no means the only one. The survey must also be capable of meeting other national information priorities. It may for instance provide an important input into the national accounts or the establishment of weights for consumer price indices. Because it is a multi-subject survey, it can also be used to meet many of the objectives of traditional income, expenditure and consumption surveys, labour force surveys, informal sector surveys and so on.

A word of caution should be given however that, as with any integrated survey of this type, certain compromises always have to be made so that, for any one particular subject such as health, agriculture or literacy, it will not provide such a complete information base as a dedicated survey in that subject.

29. There are other disadvantages, namely that in certain respects it is a heavy survey in that it uses a large questionnaire which takes time to enumerate, process and analyse. There is also the issue of the sample size. One of the limitations of the IHS is that, because of the length of time needed to enumerate a single household, the total sample size will generally have to be kept to between 2,000 to 4,000 households. The sample size is adequate for providing estimates or aggregates at the national level or even sub-national (socio-economic group) level, as long as the number of such groups is kept to around 5 to 7. But, in order to monitor the behaviour of sub-groups within these socio-economic groups, a larger sample size is really needed.

30. Also, while it is a good vehicle for understanding the mechanisms of the adjustment process it is not a good monitoring tool and cannot provide planners and policy makers with the rapid feedback that they would like on the effects of adjustment program on the different household groups. For this reason, the SDA project is also helping countries to establish a permanent monitoring capability through a lighter extensive version of the household survey, which it has called the Priority Information Collection (PIC) survey.

D. The Priority Information Collection Survey (PIC)

31. The Priority Information Collection (PIC) survey is a fundamentally different type of enquiry from the IHS. It is a monitoring survey that is designed to provide a rapid indication of "what" is occurring without necessarily concerning itself with the issues of "why" - which is the role of the IHS. As a monitoring device the PIC should contain certain key features.

32. Firstly, the survey is intended to provide rapid results therefore the questionnaire needs to be kept limited and modest in size. Essentially, the survey should be concerned with the collection of socio-economic indicators. These are used to monitor changes in the circumstances of the various household groups and to flag potential problems punctually so that remedial actions can be taken. Although the PIC covers the same basic subject areas as the IHS (employment, health, income, etc.) the number of variables per subject area is very considerably reduced. The survey should aim to establish possibly no more than 5 or 6 indicators per subject area. The PIC sets, as a goal, an interview time not to exceed one hour. This very

considerable reduction in the length of the questionnaire implies more rapid processing and a simpler analysis - all of which helps to reduce the lag between data collection and the production of survey results.

33. Secondly, the use of a shorter questionnaire allows for an expansion of the sample size. The limitations of the IHS sample size have already been touched on. The PIC, being a rapid survey, can overcome this and can use sample sizes up to 8,000 or even 10,000 households. Not only can the PIC sample be made larger in absolute terms, but the design can also be made more efficient by reducing the adverse effects of clustering through an increase in the number of primary sampling units (PSUs). With a larger and more efficient sample, it then becomes possible to identify much more precisely the sectors of the population most at risk from adjustment and to strengthen the quality of the cross-sectional analysis.

34. Thirdly, for the PIC to act as an effective monitoring device, it must not only be concerned with cross-sectional analysis but also with time-series analysis and the detection of trends. It must consequently be a survey that is administered regularly - at least annually, possibly biannually. Like the IHS, the PIC is a survey that can be used to meet other national information needs including, for instance, providing rapid estimates of agricultural production, or providing an input into a nutritional surveillance program. In helping statistical offices to establish such a monitoring capability, the SDA project is again contributing significantly to institutional strengthening.

E. The relationship between the IHS and the PIC

35. We have mentioned already that the two versions of the household survey, the IHS and PIC, are complementary tools, one being used essentially for diagnostic purposes and the other for monitoring. To adequately monitor and evaluate the effects at household level of structural adjustment, both are needed and neither is substitutable. The manner in which the two survey are interlinked and the order in which they are executed may vary however from one country to the next and will depend frequently on the country's ongoing survey program, on its existing statistical infrastructure, and on its information priorities. Some statistical offices that are starting up an SDA survey program are, at the same time, committed to other national information priorities, such as updating the weights for the construction of CPIs or supplying improved household consumption data for national accounting purposes. Such needs can be accommodated within the framework of an IHS and consequently these countries are planning to undertake an IHS in the first year. It is unlikely however that they will want to repeat a full income and expenditure survey, such as the IHS, in the

following year. The logical step in such a case is to switch to a series of PIC surveys before returning to another IHS after say 3 or 4 years. One advantage of starting with an IHS is that the analysis of the first year's data will make it possible to identify what indicators appear to be most closely correlated with poverty and thereby to refine the selection of socio-economic indicators to be monitored in subsequent years.

36. The other approach which is being adopted in some other countries is to move straight into the monitoring process and start off with a PIC survey. Such a survey can be used straightaway to set down a baseline situation and, even using only a limited set of indicators, to identify what would appear to be the most vulnerable groups. Once these groups have been identified, a sample can be designed for the IHS using these groups as strata and the IHS can be implemented during the second year using varying sampling rates to ensure that these groups of special interest are covered in great depth. A particular attraction of starting off with a PIC survey is that such a survey is less demanding in terms of statistical and data processing infrastructure, and is therefore more suitable for countries that are starting out with more limited survey resources.

37. The most important principle to be retained however is that the IHS and the PIC surveys, although similar in many ways, are fundamentally different in terms of objectives. One is detailed and probing, whilst the other is light and rapid. There may be a temptation to believe that the two objectives of "monitoring" and "diagnosis" can be combined together and executed through a single survey, but this is not an effective proposition.

F. Community level surveys

38. Before leaving the subject of surveys, it should be recalled that since much of the analysis of the SDA data is concerned with the linkages between the three levels, macro, meso and micro, data is also needed at the meso level. There may already be on-going institutional and sectoral surveys as well as price collection activities operating in the country, in which case the data generated through these systems can be used in the SDA analysis, however the SDA is also proposing a community survey. This survey will in fact be very closely linked to the household survey and will be conducted at the same time and by the same enumeration teams that are covering the household survey. One community questionnaire will be filled out for each PSU in the household survey sample. The questionnaire will include information on availability and access to social services and amenities, local institutions and sources of employment, the market infrastructure and, naturally, market prices.

III. CONCLUSIONS

39. What then are the implications of the SDA project for statistics?

40. Firstly, at the regional level the program is a joint venture which brings together multilateral and bilateral donors as well as UN specialized agencies. In view of the fact that it is a multi-sectoral program, it provides a unique opportunity to promote co-ordination of the many statistical initiatives currently taking place in Africa. To this end, the project supports a regional Statistical Task Force to serve as a think tank for the development of the statistical component of the project, with input from various international agencies. The project also hosts technical workshops and seminars which provide an ideal forum for discussing the key issues with which statistical offices are currently concerned.

41. Secondly, the project is a source of technical assistance and more importantly, of training in all fields associated with the collection, processing, analysis and use of statistical data. To this end, the project has also set up a Training Task Force, similar to the Statistical Task Force, to promote co-ordination of training initiatives and the improvement of linkages between training institutions in the donor countries and institutions in Africa. The project is encouraging the development of a broad and varied training program, ranging from specific courses in such technical areas as data processing to regional workshops on data analysis and policy preparation using real case study material drawn from SDA surveys.

42. Thirdly, at the country level, the project supports the development of statistical services, not as an end in itself, but in the context of a country operational strategy which incorporates a policy component, a programs and projects component and finally an institutional development component of which the statistical services form a part. The main advantage of such an approach is that it treats statistical services as services which should be demand driven rather than supply driven and thus ensures better co-ordination between users and collectors of statistical data.

43. Finally, the SDA defines a key role for statistical offices to play in helping to integrate social dimensions into the design of macro-economic policies which will contribute to an overall raising of living standards in the participating countries.

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